

# I meet a lot of very peculiar people!

## 1 Corinthians 12.14-30



***"If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would make it any less a part of the body." 1 Corinthians 12.15. Assorted legs and feet from the Corinth Museum, dedicated in thanksgiving at the temple of the healing god Asclepius.***

*Today's TFTD comes from Mark Hackney, who is a Lay Reader at St. Michael's And All Angels, Bramhall.*

I converted to Christianity seven years ago, and, as a result, I come across a lot of very peculiar people!

The interesting, and wonderfully sounding, King James' version of the Bible states that we Christians are 'a peculiar people'. [1Peter 2.9]

Now, the meaning of words change overtime, and The King James was written hundreds of years ago. In fact, taking the English language even further back in time, even before the King James, 'apple' used to mean any fruit; a 'girl' was a small child (irrespective of gender); a 'worm' was a

snake... or a dragon.

And, 'peculiar' in the King James means 'specific', 'particular'. We Christians are indeed a distinctive people, as we promote God's glorious Word in the worldly world outside of our church walls.

But, I don't know about you, I am *also* perfectly happy for the contemporary meaning of the word to be applied to my Christian self – somewhat separate, certainly strangely different.

During a meeting a while ago at Church House, a colleague turned up wearing a very *peculiar* T-shirt. It was royal blue, emblazoned with a large Christian Cross. Below the cross, in bold font, words declared 'I Am Not Embarrassed!'. He holds regular Bible Study meetings in a room booked in a local pub, and this shirt would be worn proudly.

Too Much? Too 'in your face'? I don't think so. it is simply being *peculiar*. Likewise, I recall my church's congregation two Easter's ago, pre-coronavirus, processing behind the cross into the centre of Bramhall village. An occasional car, journey delayed, hooted its horn, and curious shoppers stared at all the kerfuffle. How peculiar.

*Our wonderful passage for today, from 1 Corinthians 12.14-30, notes that we are 'members in particular'. And we are also all members of a shared peculiarity.*

Our love and care for each other, our sense of teamwork and common purpose, our very peculiarity, must be marked and upheld. Through God's grace, we all have different gifts, talents, and yet we can stand together united, because we are all a very peculiar *body of people*. The most basic thing about our church is its identity as God's true people.

'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it'.

God has made us as one. When we get it right, there need be no 'schisms'. All of us 'are necessary': one particular body of people following the one God. We must stand together in our God-given peculiarity and joyously

accept 'the body is not one member, but many'.

So, let us rejoice, unite always, in our peculiarity. We worship One whose love outshines any potential discord or disagreement. I am different from you, but I realise that, as a fellow Christian, a sister or brother, you are every bit as peculiar as myself.

Three quick thoughts on just how peculiar we Christians are.

*Firstly*, we really try our best to lose our minds – in a manner of speaking. We do this as we become settled in church before a service. We reduce ourselves as we quieten down in prayer, we tell our egos to go away and we focus, and try to listen to God. To borrow a Buddhist expression: "We quieten the monkey-mind." We empty our minds and, as we listen to God, we fill them again with Someone better.

*Secondly*. We do not strike back when we are physically or verbally struck, we simply turn the other cheek. But we're not wimps! It's often harder to respond in a peaceful, controlled manner than it is to reciprocate the aggression. We calmly look our attacker straight back in the eye. Gandhi, not a Christian but a man of peace, noticed and was impressed by this peaceful, Christian form of assertiveness. He admitted he used it as part of his tactics to get the British out of India. It worked.

*Thirdly*, On the religious front as well, we Christians are a peculiar lot. As the writer Tim Keller reminds us: other religions can have a prophet, an initiator, who points the way to God. But our number one prophet is God. With some religions, you have to try to get God's attention and dash around following rules to maintain attention. Whilst we too have our important commandments, our God walks towards us. From the very beginning, He knows and names us. We are born and given His love and Grace... regardless. Whether or not we listen and how we react is up to us. But He's always there by our side, waiting, calling our name.

So, our common peculiarity triumphs over any and all differences we may experience. Though we are many, we are all one body.

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